CREATOR

VOLUME 29 NUMBER 2

A Tale of Fur & Delight

Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

"The joy of the Lord is your strength"—so writes Christ's Spirit through His faithful servant Nehemiah (Nehemiah 8:10). When things around us seem discouraging, as they did for the Jews of Nehemiah's day, delighting in our Creator, Savior, and Sovereign Lord causes us to "mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31). God can use something as simple as a puppy playing in the yard or a horse galloping across an open meadow to bring renewed strength to our weary hearts. Our Lord made these mammals the way He did to exude the joy of His character. When we're having difficulty seeing beyond our problems, spending a day at a local zoo and enjoying the mammals on display there, has a wonderful way of refreshing our souls in Christ!

Is the Lord Jesus your desire? Is He winsome[1] to you? If so, how has this marked your life? We truly serve a God of eternal delights (Psalm 16:11), so let the animals teach us this truth (Job 12:7).

1 Winsome means "delightful."

The Mammals of His Glory

Great are the works of the Lord;
They are studied by all who delight in them.
Psalm 111:2

This issue of the ***CREATOR Journal*** completes our brief study of vertebrates (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish). And perhaps no other group of animals reveals Christ's incredibly creative mind more than mammals. Consider the vast differences between a whale and a bat—both mammals—one swims and the other flies. Then there is the enigmatic duck-billed platypus. Though rightly considered a mammal, it has features of a bird (bill), a reptile (soft turtle-like eggs), an amphibian (webbed feet), and a fish (like a shark it can detect electrical fields)! So please join us now as we once again venture into the world of Christ's unmatched winsomeness.

Aardvark

Sea Lions spend much of their time in the ocean searching for fish to eat but go ashore to rest and give birth. They can raise themselves using their front flippers.

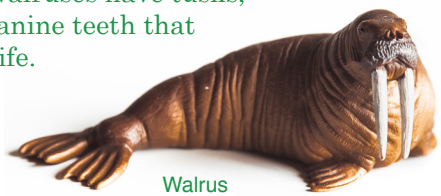
PINNIPEDS

Include **Sea Lions**, **Walruses**, and **Seals**; all are *carnivores*. Like whales, pinnipeds have a large amount of fat under their skin (blubber), which provides them energy, insulation, and buoyancy in the water.

Seals cannot raise their head above their body, thus move on land like inchworms.

Harbor Seal

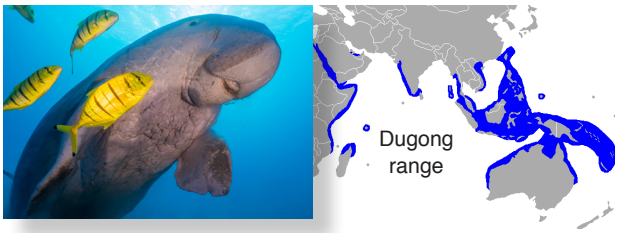
Walruses feed on clams, mollusks, and crabs. Males weigh up to 3,500 lbs (1,600 kg). Both male and female walruses have tusks, which are upper canine teeth that grow throughout life.



SIRENIA

Dugongs and **Manatees** are gentle *aquatic herbivores*.

Dugongs live along the coasts of the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans.



Manatees live along the coasts of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean. Cow and calf are commonly seen together.

Grow to 13 feet (4 meters).

The Winsome Mammals of Christ

ELEPHANTS

diurnal, terestrial, herbivores

African Elephants

Can produce 31 different calls.

Have larger bodies, ears, and tusks than Asian Elephants.

Asian Elephants

Live in India and Indonesia.

WHALES & DOLPHINS

Baleen Whales

Are the largest animals God ever placed on earth.

Dolphins

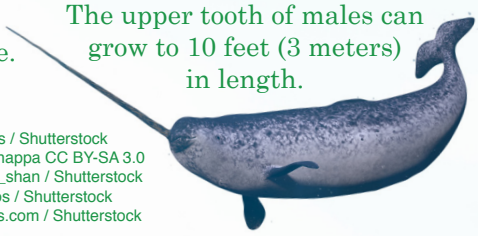
Often demonstrate the winsomeness of our Creator.

Toothed Whales

Include **Dolphins**, **Belugas**, **Porpoises**, **Narwhals**, and **Sperm Whales**. Like bats, they can echolocate.

Narwhals

The upper tooth of males can grow to 10 feet (3 meters) in length.



Pages 2 and 9 form a "Mammal Poster."

Sea lion—Rhododendrites CC BY-SA 4.0
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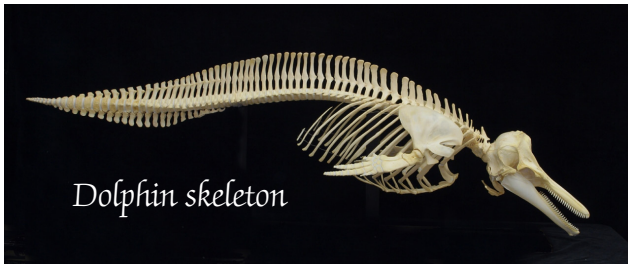
A Community of Creatures

All flesh is not the same flesh, . . .
1 Corinthians 15:39

Christ fashioned a special group of organisms known as *vertebrates*. Vertebrates are animals *with bones* (including a backbone composed of *vertebrae*): mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. While most scientists consider people a type of mammal, the Holy Spirit sets us apart in Scripture: "All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish" (1 Corinthians 15:39). People are *not* animals, but we do have bones and vertebrae


Dolphin skeleton

(vurt - tuh - bray). Creatures with bones can grow to a much larger size than those without (invertebrates),[2] further demonstrating the creative glory Jesus shares with His Father.

What Makes a Mammal a Mammal?

God made the beasts of the earth after their kind,
and the cattle after their kind, . . .
and God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:25

What can we say of Christ's incredible creation of mammals? Some are so sure-footed that an impossibly steep cliff face is no obstacle for them.[3] Others plunge two miles into the icy-black depths of the ocean and stay submerged for over three hours.[4] Of all the vertebrates, mammals provide the best care for their young, far exceeding even nesting birds and clearly revealing the great fatherhood of God!

2 Invertebrates include insects, spiders, crabs, worms, starfish, etc.
3 Mountain goats (see ***kids' kreation*** # 118, side 2)
4 Cuvier's beaked whales (see ***kids' kreation*** # 118, side 2)

Mammal characteristics:
1) God covered the bodies of most mammals with *fur*.
2) Jesus provides all mammal mothers with *milk* to feed their young.
3) The *brains* of mammals are quite complex.
4) The vast majority of mammals are *born live* (they don't hatch from eggs).
5) Like birds, mammals are *endothermic*[5] (warm-blooded).

(Think *FuMBLE*—Fur, Milk, Brain, Live-birth, Endothermic.)

Exceptions to the Rule

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. Isaiah 55:8

Mammals reveal Christ's unmatched and far-reaching creativity, wisdom, and inventiveness through the way He fashions their bodies and behavior. Many scientists have tried to place these animals into well-defined groups but become perplexed because some don't fit neatly into categories. More than any other vertebrate group, the mammals our Lord Jesus made often reveal an "exception to the rule."

But why are mammals difficult to categorize? After all, aren't they usually warm, furry creatures that walk on all fours? *Not always*. God purposely created this vast array of different creatures to stimulate our wonder of Him and prove to us that His infinite mind cannot be contained (Isaiah 55:8):

- The hippopotamus lacks fur but does have hair on its ears and tail.
- Most mammals have four legs; whales have none.
- Bats are the only mammals that can truly fly.
- Monotremes are mammals that lay eggs!
- Most mammals walk or run; kangaroos and rabbits hop.
- The duck-billed platypus and echidnas (eh - KID - nahs) can detect the electrical field produced by the muscles of other animals. (Echid - yah not!)

5 Endothermic is Greek for "internal heat."

CARNIVORES

Include **Cats**, **Dogs**, **Raccoons**, **Skunks**, **Bears**, and **Musk-producing** mammals. All possess *canine teeth*.

Felines (cat-like)

Include **Cheetahs**, **Hyenas**, **Mongoose**, **Civets**, **Meerkats**, **Tigers**, **Lions**, **Leopards**, and **Panthers**.

A Tiger should simultaneously fill our hearts with terror and joy.

Jeremiah Burroughs once wrote: "Every creature cries out unto us, 'Oh, will you not fear that God who has made me!'" (*Gospel Fear*, 1649).

African Leopard

Skunks

Produce a pungent scent of mercaptins and sulfuric acid! Ten species are known.

solitary, nocturnal, omnivores

Spotted Skunk ... stinky but cute!

Bears

Christ created eight species.

omnivores

Asian Black Bear

Musk Producers

Include **Weasels**, **Badgers**, **Otters**, and **Wolverines**.

a sweet European Otter

Raccoons & Coati

Live in the Western Hemisphere.

Raccoon

Coati

Canids (dog-like)

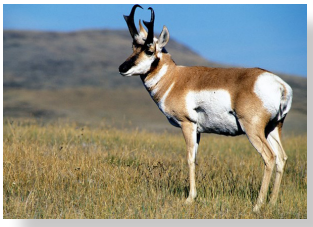
Include **Wolves**, **Coyotes**, **Dogs**, **Foxes**, **Dingos**, and **Jackals**.

Black-backed Jackal

EVEN-TOED HOOVES

Include **Pigs**, **Hippos**, **Camels**, **Llamas**, **Deer**, **Giraffe**, **Pronghorn**, **Bison**, **Goats**, **Sheep**, and **Cows**.

large, terrestrial, herbivores



Pronghorns are the second-fastest mammal on Earth. They have been clocked at 60 mph, slightly slower than a cheetah (61 mph).

a cute, young Hippo

"The Lord is my shepherd." Psalm 23:1

Sheep

a curious Giraffe

ODD-TOED HOOVES

Equines, **Rhinos**, and **Tapirs**.

large, terrestrial, herbivores

Equines (horse-like)

Include **Horses**, **Zebras**, and **Donkeys**.

Zebra herd closeup

Rhinoceros

Includes **White**, **Black**, **Javan**, **Sumatran**, and **Indian**.

White Rhino

Tapirs

Include **Mountain**, **Baird's**, **Lowland**, and **Malayan**.

Malayan Tapir

Pages 4 and 7 form a "Mammal Poster."

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A Quick Course in Latin

Many of the words used in science and medicine come from **Latin**:

carnivore = carn- (flesh) + vorare (to eat)
herbivore = herb- (plant) eater
omnivore = omni- (all) eater
insectivore = insectum (insect) eater
folivore = folium (leaf) eater
frugivore = frug- (fruit) eater
nectivore = necti (nectar) eater
nocturnal = noct- (night) active
diurnal = dies (day) active
terrestrial = terra (ground) animal
arboreal = arbor (tree) animal
fossorial = fossor (digging) animal

Marsupials and Monotremes

For who has known the mind of the Lord? Romans 11:34

Marsupials and monotremes are mammals that definitely "go against the norm." One of the most familiar marsupials—the kangaroo—carries its tiny babies in a pouch of skin (a *marsupium*) located on its belly. Its pouch is similar to an Eskimo papoose. Their newborns are extremely small and need extra-special protection. A side note: A red kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*) newborn weighs less than a gram.[6] An adult male kangaroo is 45,000 times bigger than its baby, which means that if a male newborn grows to adulthood, it will increase 45,000 times in size and weight. (This would be like a human infant reaching a weight of 180 tons as an adult!)

Monotremes are even more "strange." A single species of duck-billed platypus and three types of echidnas form this group. Instead of birthing live young, these mammals lay soft, leathery, turtle-like eggs. Their young normally hatch in two weeks or so and are then nursed with milk (something turtles cannot do).

6 The young of the Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*)—the only marsupial found in North America—weigh only 0.1 gram at birth.

Only God Can . . .

Create warmed-blooded creatures that act exactly like cold-blooded insects. Of all mammals, the naked mole rat has this most unique behavior. The colonies of these rats are amazingly similar to those of ants (please read ***CREATOR*** Volume 17 Numbers 1 & 2). Like ants, naked mole rats selflessly cooperate with one another to dig underground homes. And like ants, Jesus made them in many different sizes, which determines their function in the colony. The largest rat is the "queen" who alone gives birth to baby rats. Others protect the nest (soldiers) or help maintain it (workers). Who else than our awesome God could create a mammal that acts just like an insect?!

Naked mole rat relaxing

Be Fruitful

O Lord, You preserve man and beast. Psalm 36:6

The Lord of Life created plants and animals to multiply and spread the fame of His name around the earth.[7] Had sin not entered the world, it can be assumed that living things would reproduce themselves only slowly. But with widespread death, those mammals with short lifespans must now have several babies a year to fulfill God's command. Most larger mammals that live many years produce one or two young at a time. Through Christ's winsome care, smaller mammals are especially enabled to birth more babies. Since larger mammals live longer, they don't need as many young to maintain family size in a given area.

7 Genesis 1:22

Mammal	Lifespan (in years)	Babies (per year)
Honey Possum	1-2	20
Forest Shrew	1	7
Cottontail Rabbit	5	5
Wolf	16	5
Narwhal	40	1
Hippopotamus	50	1*

* Every two years

The Importance of Names

Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field . . . and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. Genesis 2:19

Names are important to God as they bring Him glory. The Spirit uses names to magnify Christ Jesus: the Lion of Judah and the Lamb that was slain (Revelation 5:5-6). The Old Testament heralds God's covenant names, which reveal His character and being: El Shaddai (the Lord God Almighty) and Jehovah Nissi (the Lord my Banner) are two examples.

Agnus Dei [8]

When our Lord created the Garden of Eden, He eagerly desired that Adam name the animals. Common and scientific names for mammals are often very descriptive of their character or being. An obvious example is the *anteater*. Biologists call it Vermilingua (Latin vermi- "worm" + lingua "tongue"). Jesus fashioned the anteater's tongue to be very long and tubular, like a worm. It's also sticky so that ants can be caught with ease.

Other examples include the *polar bear*—it lives near the North Pole; *capybara*—Portuguese for kapí (grass) + -wara (eater); and *armadillo*—the Spanish translation of an Aztec word meaning, "turtle-rabbit."

8 Agnus Dei (Ag - nus Day) is Latin for the "Lamb of God."

Special Senses

How great are Your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep. Psalm 92:5

Arguably, the most unique gift Jesus gives to some mammals is *echolocation*. Simply put, echolocation is the ability of an animal to *locate* an object by producing loud, high-pitched sounds that bounce (*echo*) off an object and return to be analyzed in the brain. This ingenious system of sound production and detection allows an animal to "paint a picture" in its mind of the world around it. Several species of mammals can echolocate: bats, shrews, desmans, dolphins, beluga and sperm whales. Most of these listen for the returning "clicks" and "chirps" using their ears. Our ever-inventive Lord Jesus gifted the dolphin somewhat differently. It produces high-frequency sounds in its forehead (melon) and detects reflected echoes in its jaw.

The vast majority of mammals cannot echolocate, but some can hear sounds over a great distance. Elephants—using their large ears—detect the calls of other elephants from a mile (1-2 km) away. A wolf can hear sounds from a distance of six to ten miles (10-16 km). And our Creator gives whales the astonishing ability to sing songs that can then be enjoyed by fellow whales up to 10,000 miles (16,000 km) across the ocean!

Like sharks, monotremes can detect the electrical fields produced by the muscles of other creatures. God covered the bill of the duck-billed platypus with 40,000 sensory glands that sense electricity.

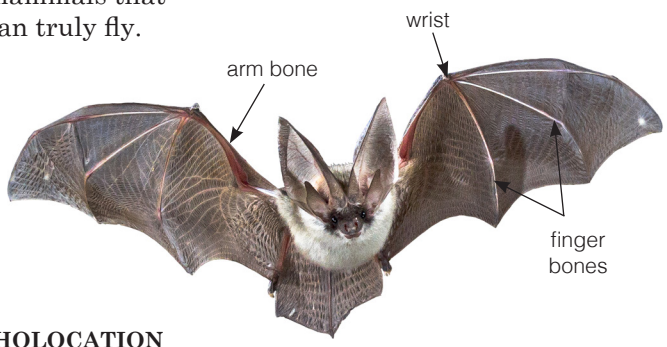
There is some debate about whether the bear or the African elephant has the best sense of smell. For our purposes, here are some creatures that have been tested and the distance they can detect odors:

Grizzly bear	20 miles / 32 km
African elephant	12 miles / 19 km
Dog	12 miles / 19 km
Cat	4 miles / 6 km
People	6.5 feet / 2 m

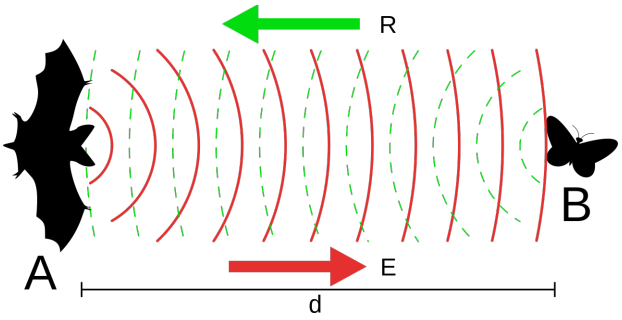
BATS

Are the only mammals that can truly fly.

Jesus creates the wings of a bat by stretching a thin layer of skin (patagium) over its legs, arms, wrists, and finger bones.



ECHOLOCATION



A **Bat** (A) produces extremely loud, high-frequency clicks to find insects at night.[9] Some of the sound bounces off its prey (B) and comes back to the bat's ears. Returning clicks are mysteriously decoded in its brain through means we don't understand!

MARSUPIALS & MONOTREMES

Include **Kangaroos**, **Koala**, **Wombats**, **Wallabies**, **Numbats**, **Honey Possum**, **Echidnas**, and **Duck-billed Platypus**.

About half of all female marsupials have a pouch or *marsupium*, in which to carry their young after birth.

The **Honey Possum**[10] has the smallest babies of all mammals. At birth, they weigh only 5 mg. It would take four newborns to equal the weight of one mustard seed!

"SMALL MAMMALS"

This is a confusing group of mammals that scientists cannot fully classify. It includes **Shrews**, **Moles**, **Hedgehogs**, **Desmans**, **Colugos**, and **Tenecs**.

DESMANS

Can swim and echolocate. Eat fish and invertebrates.

HEDGEHOGS

Live in Africa, Europe, and Asia. When threatened, they roll into a tight ball with spines pointing out.

nocturnal, terrestrial, omnivores

Four-toed Hedgehog

SHREWS

Their saliva is toxic!

fossorial

Eurasian Water Shrew

COLUGOS

Can glide up to 100 yards/ 100 meters.

RABBITS, HARES, PIKAS

Include 42 species of **Rabbits**, 33 species of **Hares**, and 34 species of **Pikas**.

VOLCANO RABBIT

Lives on the slope of 4 extinct volcanoes near Mexico City.

1988 Jersey stamp with Volcano Rabbit

PIKAS

fossorial, alpine

American Pika

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Kangaroo—© Andrew Atkinson / Shutterstock
Echolocation—José Augusto CC BY-SA 3.0
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Pika—© Eivor Kuchta / Shutterstock

9 Fruit bats (flying foxes) do not echolocate. They find food using their eyes and nose.
10 The Aboriginal name is Noolbenger (ngool-boon-goor).

Jesus—Our Delight

You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
Psalm 16:11

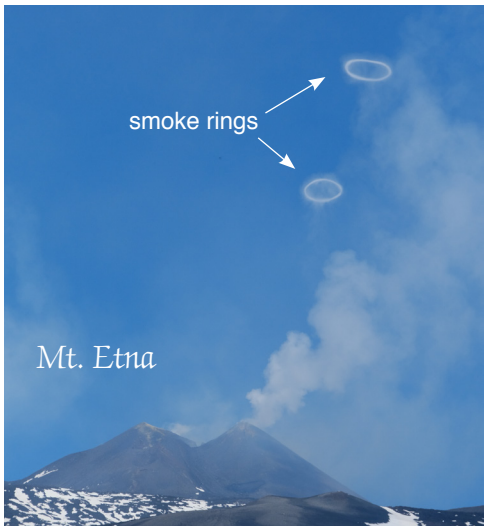
In what ways are mammals whimsical to you? I think this is a difficult question to answer because there are so many things about these animals to enjoy. If we own dogs, cats, horses, or goats, I'm certain most of us simply like being close to them.

For children, the greatest thrill may be watching their pets play or better still, playing with them! Our Lord Jesus lovingly gifted many animals with a desire to romp around, run fast, or splash in the water.

We can also conclude that we are drawn to mammals because they are often warm, furry, and sweet-looking (though there are many we should never attempt to embrace). Mammals also clearly shine the amazing character of our Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of God's children! The personality of nature's Artist radiates from His artwork: wisdom, power, beauty, sweetness, and care. In some mammals, we also see His gentleness, faithfulness, and patience (especially mother animals). Our Lord delights in what He's made, and if we have eyes to see, we will enjoy winsomeness in the mammals of His Creation throughout our lives.

Four-day-old tiger cub

As our Sovereign Creator, the character of Christ Jesus—nature's great Artist—must "fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10). Therefore, it should not surprise us to see examples of His delightfulness, not only in mammals but *everywhere* in Creation. "What about an erupting volcano . . . how does that show God as winsome?" you may retort. Recently, Mt Etna, a volcano in Italy, was seen blowing smoke rings out of its vent. Volcanoes can be extremely dangerous—no sane person will doubt that. Yet amid potential peril, our Lord created something quite delightful to observe. Smoke rings!

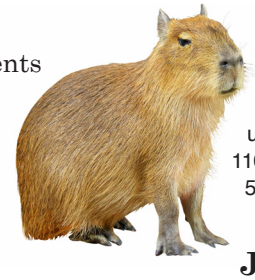


Only God's people are truly captivated by Christ. Nonbelievers might find temporary entertainment in something Jesus has made, but this enjoyment is quite limited. Their delight terminates on the object and can go no higher. As God's children, the winsomeness that Christ reveals in our lives and His Creation forms a "window" into the infinite heart of our Creator who alone is *Eternal Delight!*

RODENTS

Include **Capybaras**, **Mice**, **Rats**, **Beavers**, **Jerboas**, **Hamsters**, **Gerbils**, **Lemmings**, **Voles**, **Squirrels**, and **Porcupines**.

Capybaras
World's largest rodents
semi-aquatic



up to 110 lbs / 50 kg

House Mice
nocturnal

"Hi!"

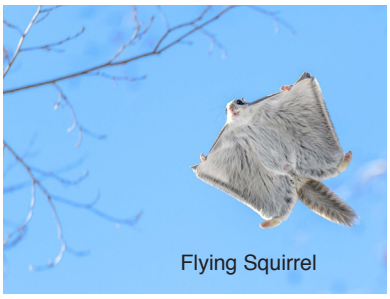
Beavers
nocturnal, aquatic

Jerboas

Another winsome surprise from our Lord Jesus: a cute rodent with the nose of a pig, the ears of a rabbit, and the legs of a kangaroo—it hops!

Lemmings & Voles
diurnal, terrestrial

Squirrels
diurnal, arboreal

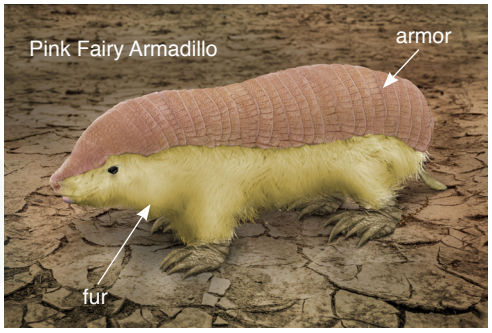


A **Flying Squirrel** should be called a "gliding squirrel" because it does not possess controlled flight. The skin between its arms and legs is called the *patagium*.

Porcupines
terrestrial
omnivores

ARMADILLOS

Brazilian Three-banded Armadillo



God gave the rare **Pink Fairy Armadillo** two types of skins.

PRIMATES

Include **Lemurs**, **Tarsiers**, **Lorises**, **Marmosets**, **Tamarins**, **Monkeys**, **Macaques,** and the **Great Apes**.

Slow Lorises
Live in Southeast Asia.
nocturnal, arboreal, insectivores, frugivores

Gorillas
diurnal, terrestrial, folivores, frugivores

HYRAX / ROCK Bbadger

diurnal, terrestrial, omnivore

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Jerboa—© Lauren Suryanata / Shutterstock
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Squirrel—© Anaredif / Shutterstock
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The Book of Life

He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. Revelation 3:5

Our Lord tells the story of a rich man and a poor man in Luke 16. The impoverished man's name was Lazarus, but the Spirit doesn't give us the name of the wealthy man. Why? Those in Heaven are honored, having their names recorded in the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5). The inhabitants of Hell, however, are sadly left nameless . . . forever.

It is said of our age that many people long to "make a name for themselves." Is this a good thing to pursue? If Christ does not give us *His name* (Christian—Acts 11:26), we remain unknown to the Lord of Life. And whatever we make of ourselves here on Earth won't matter if not done in the Spirit. On the Judgment Day, many will declare their "righteous deeds" (Isaiah 64:6) before the throne of King Jesus, but He will respond to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matthew 7:23). This is a sobering and terrifying verdict!

Scripture also states emphatically that because Christ "humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. . . , God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:8-11).

Because of our sin, the gate to Paradise was closed (Genesis 3:24). But the Cross of Christ has become the narrow way back into the everlasting Garden of God. While dying on the Cross, Jesus promised the repentant, believing thief that he would join Him in Paradise (Luke 23:39-43). The thief's name goes unmentioned, but we can be certain that he was soon given a holy name to own for all eternity (Revelation 2:17).

"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." Luke 23:43

Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Do you see the horror of your sins? Have you ever repented of them before God? Do you believe that Christ's death is the only means to be forgiven and made right with God? If you can truly answer "Yes!" to all these questions then you can rest assured that Jesus knows your name!

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him . . . I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it." Revelation 2:17

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